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the Spiral Path

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The story of Lucius Krell's wife and Angela Krell's mother is explored in this very special issue.

MAKING ART: I was raised in a family that valued political integrity highly. Childhood memories of my mother's outrage at being asked to sign a "loyalty oath" during the McCarthy era (so she could work in a library, of all places) combined with what she had told me about life in Germany as Hitler rose to power, and i knew that fighting fascism and repression were as important to life as . . . well, as life itself.

As i grew older, i saw a curious contradiction in the area where art intersects with politics. Art (by which i mean all art – drama, literature, dance, painting, poetry and the rest) must be protected always from political repressives who would censor and destroy it because it may lead people into avenues of free thought and fellow-feeling. But the politics of struggle against severe violations of human rights often casts the role of art into doubt: will singing songs really end apartheid in South Africa?

At one time i saw the polarity of art versus struggle as epitomized in the difference between two towns in California – San Francisco (where i was born) and Berkeley (where i was raised).

San Francisco, garbed in many colours – not all of them in the visible spectrum – represented the triumph of art over all . . . and it fell prey to art's lesser known nemesis, not repression but success. Berkeley, land of City Council meetings and student protests, was dangerous in its idealism: people were actually killed over trivialities such as public parks versus parking lots.

I left Berkeley when i couldn't take the tear-gassing anymore, but i didn't move to San Francisco, land of lotus-eaters. Instead i chose to "live" my politics in a quiet environment and make what art i could with my own hands. That course of action kept me busy for a decade, sewing quilts and refusing to vote for military build-ups.

The trouble was, i needed more art in my life than i could make for me. I also needed more ways to work for the betterment of life than just saying "no" to local corruption and graft.

What i needed, and what i finally sought, was involvement with the larger scale arts and entertainments as well as the world arena of human interactions.

All of which leads me to a small transcendent moment in an old rehearsal room above the cracking-plaster decay of the St. Mark's Theatre in New York City a couple of days ago.

Dean's brother Jan Mullaney, former Eclipse Publisher, was at the piano. Sitting next to him were Mary Bracken Phillips, a singer and song-writer, and David Cooper, a singer. They were running through some numbers from the musical Jan and Mary had written, called "Cradle Song." As they worked at their lines and joked over their miscues, i felt a tremendous sense of peaceful well-being. I saw very clearly the similarities between their making of a musical and my daily work toward the making of comic books.

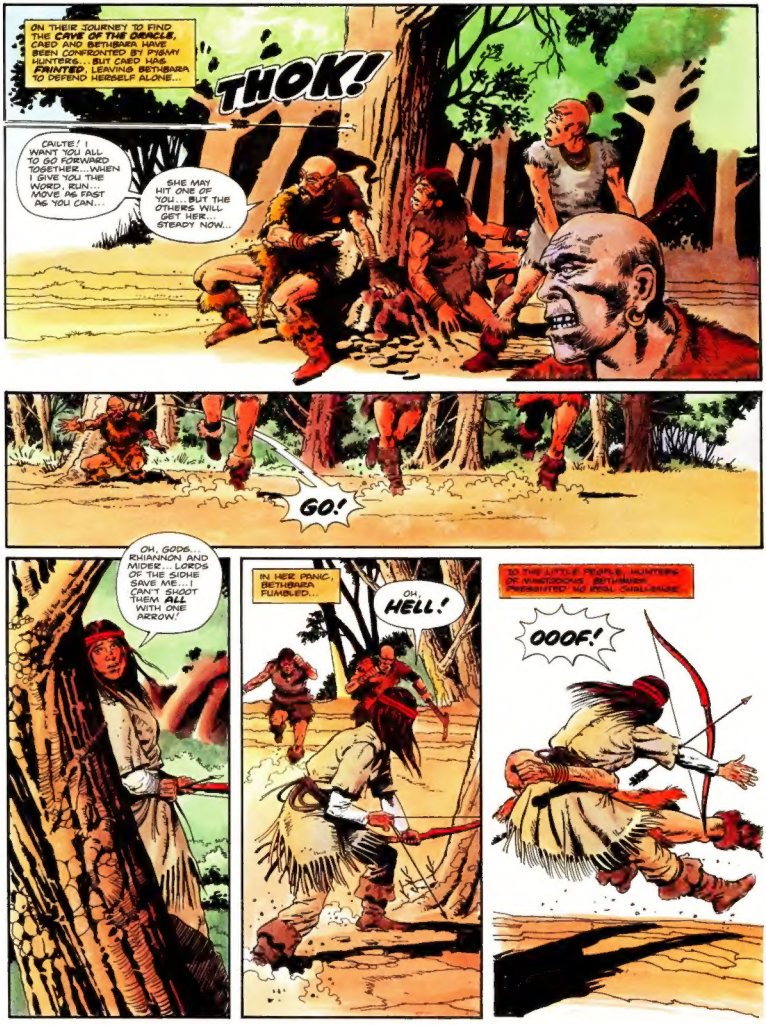
What i saw in that moment was the vast linkage of all people who have ever made art, and especially all those whose goals included mass popular entertainment. The work behind the scenes to bring art of any kind before the public, the presentation of the piece in hope that someone who sees it will be aesthetically delighted and even emotionally moved, this is a very fine thing, that's all. It must be protected from dictators and thugs, it must be kept free from the taint of corrupt influence, and it must be open to anyone who wishes to participate.

Making art may be the best thing humans can do. It may also be one of the most political, because it insists on freedom in order to flourish. We need not condemn a governmental system for anything worse than its repression of art to demand its overthrow. Art is freedom and we shall be free.

catherine yronwode

THE SPIRAL PATH™ no. 2, July 1986. Published by Eclipse Comics, P.O. Box 199, Guerneville, CA 95446. Catherine Yronwode, Editor-in-Chief. Dean Mullaney, Publisher. The Spiral Path TM and ©1986 Steve Parkhouse. All other material ©1986 Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. All rights reserved. Film by SM Graphics. Printed in Canada.

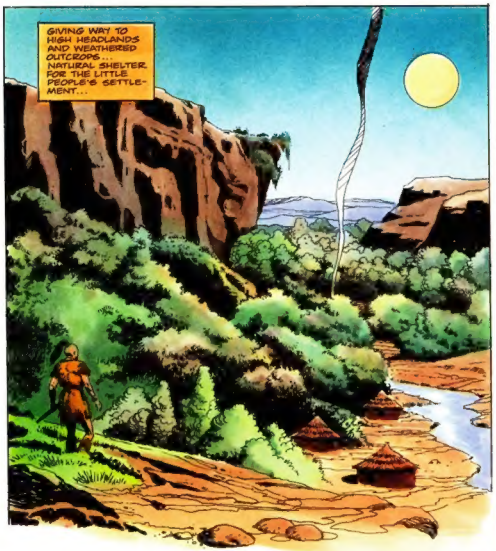
the SPIRALPATH


ON THEIR JOURNEY TO FIND THE CAVE OF THE ORACLE, CAED AND BETHBARA HAVE BEEN CONFRONTED BY PIGMY HUNTERS... BUT CAED HAS FAINTED, LEAVING BETHBARA TO DEFEND HERSELF ALONE...
THOK!
CAULTE! I WANT YOU ALL TO GO FORWARD TOGETHER... WHEN I GIVE YOU THE WORD, RUN... MOVE AS FAST AS YOU CAN...
SHE MAY HIT ONE OF YOU... BUT THE OTHERS WILL GET HER... STEADY NOW...
GO!
OH, GODS... RHIANNON AND MIDER... LORDS OF THE SIDHE SAVE ME... I CAN'T SHOOT THEM ALL WITH ONE ARROW!
IN HER PANIC, BETHBARA FUMBLED...
OH, HELL!
TO THE LITTLE PEOPLE, HUNTERS OF WHITECOOMB, BETHBARA PRESENTED NO REAL CHALLENGE
OOOF!

the Spiralpath

WITH TEARS OF DESPAIR MISTING HER EYES, BETHBARA WAS MARCHED THROUGH MILES OF FOREST...

UNTIL FINALLY, THE TREES BEGAN TO THIN...



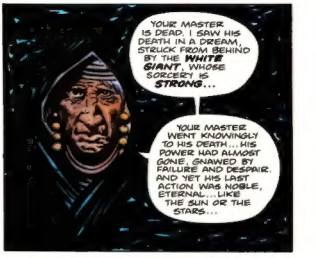
AND THERE, BY A CAVE HUNG OVER WITH GROWTH, THEY HALTED... AND CAED WAS ROUSED FROM HIS INVOLUNTARY SLUMBER...
I'M SORRY WE HAD TO PUT YOU OUT. WE INTENDED NO HARM, BUT YOU COULD HAVE BEEN DANGEROUS...
WE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING. WE WERE SIMPLY TOLD TO BRING YOU HERE. THE MOTHER WISHES TO SEE YOU...

MOTHER! THE TRAVELLERS ARE HERE! WE HAVE BROUGHT THEM AS YOU INSTRUCTED!
MOTHER? ARE YOU THERE?

YES, YES... I'M HERE, MATHYLWCH. WHERE ELSE WOULD I BE?
SEND THE TRAVELLERS IN... BID THEM COME FORWARD, WHERE I MAY SEE THEM...

COME IN, COME IN... DON'T BE AFRAID. COME AND BE SEATED... REST YOURSELVES...
FOR THE TIME BEING YOUR JOURNEY IS OVER, SO BE CONTENT AND TAKE YOUR EASE...

CAED WHISPERED IN THE DARKNESS...
THIS ASED MOTHER MUST BE THE ORACLE MY MASTER SPOKE OF..
SHE HAS THE GIFT OF SECOND SIGHT... AND IT IS SAID SHE MAY LIVE IN HER DREAMS WITH GOVERNANCE... AND EVEN POWER!
I'VE HEARD OF SUCH THINGS. MY FATHER ONCE HOPED FOR SUCH GIFTS IN ME...TO NO AVAIL IT SEEMS.
MOTHER...CAN YOU TELL ME ANYTHING OF MY MASTER, RUAD? I SAW A VISION OF HIM LATELY AND FEAR THE WORST...


YOUR MASTER IS DEAD. I SAW HIS DEATH IN A DREAM, STRUCK FROM BEHIND BY THE WHITE GIANT, WHOSE SORCERY IS STRONG...
YOUR MASTER WENT KNOWINGLY TO HIS DEATH... HIS POWER HAD ALMOST GONE, GNAWED BY FAILURE AND DESPAIR. AND YET HIS LAST ACTION WAS NOBLE, ETERNAL... LIKE THE SUN OR THE STARS...

UNDER THE HILL, KING GALBRAIN SLEEPS BENEATH THE MANTLE OF YOUR MASTER'S POWER. THERE HE WILL REMAIN FOR AS LONG AS EVIL RULES, GUARDED BY HIS FAITHFUL WARRIORS...
A NEW KING WILL RISE IN TAIRNGIR, UNDESERVING OF CROWN OR THRONE... A KING OF TERROR AND DEATH!

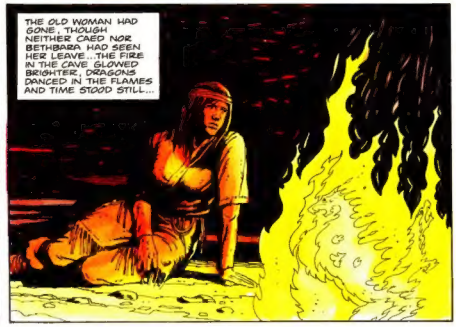
AS FOR YOU, MY CHILDREN... YOUR DESTINIES ARE LINKED. ONE OF YOU WILL RISE. THE OTHER WILL FALL...
THOSE WHO WOULD WALK WITH THE GODS MUST TAKE THEIR FIRST STEPS UPON THE SPIRAL PATH...
AND IN THAT DARK JOURNEY, MANY MYSTERIES ARE REVEALED...

BUT NOW YOU MUST REST... YOUR JOURNEY WILL CONTINUE IN TIME...
HERE... HERE IS DRINK FOR YOU NOURISHMENT FOR THE SOUL AND THE BODY... DRINK DEEP AND SLEEP WELL.

BETHBARA RAISED A BOWL TO HER LIPS, AND HER STOMACH ALMOST TURNED...
GODS... IT'S FOUL! ACORNS AND LEAF-MOULD BY ITS SMELL... I THINK I'D RATHER STARVE!

BUT CAED DRANK DEEPLY, SEEMINGLY UNAFFECTED BY THE POWERFUL BREW...

THE HOURS PASSED SLOWLY... NIGHT HAD FALLEN AND A FIRE WAS BURNING... BETHBARA BECAME AWARE THAT CAED WAS SLEEPING... HER EYES GREW HEAVY...


THE OLD WOMAN HAD GONE, THOUGH NEITHER CAED NOR BETHBARA HAD SEEN HER LEAVE... THE FIRE IN THE CAVE GLOWED BRIGHTER, DRAGONS DANCED IN THE FLAMES AND TIME STOOD STILL...

the SPIRALPATH
THEN SUDDENLY, AS IF WAKING FROM A DREAM, THEY WERE OUTSIDE THE CAVE...
STANDING IN THE COOL NIGHT AIR, BENEATH STARS THAT HUNG LIKE LANTERNS...
THE CAVE ENTRANCE HAS GONE...OR CHANGED...DID WE COME THIS WAY? HOW DID WE GET HERE?
I...I CAN'T REMEMBER...
BETHBARA! THIS WAY...COME, WE MUST MOVE ON! THERE'S A PATH HERE THAT LEADS UP INTO THE HILLS...
BETHBARA...WHAT IS IT? WHY DO YOU LINGER?
I'M COMING! A PATH DID YOU SAY? IS THAT WHAT THE MOTHER SPOKE OF?
WAIT FOR ME, CAED!
I CAN SEE IT WINDING UPWARDS...
WHERE? I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING YET...HELP ME ONTO THIS LEDGE, CAED...I WANT TO SEE IT, TOO...
IT WAS MEANT FOR ME, BETHBARA...THE PATH I MUST WALK...
A PATHWAY TO THE STARS...
A PATHWAY TO THE GODS!!
OH, NO... NO!!

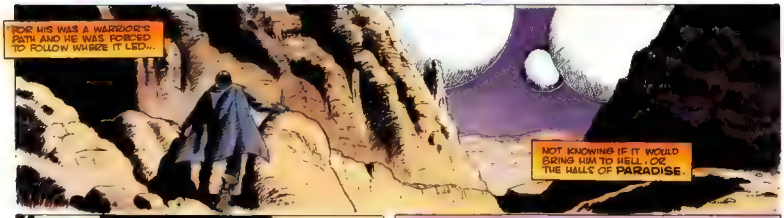
the SPIRALPATH
BETHBARA! WE HAVE FOUND THE SPIRAL PATH! THE PATH TO THE GODS!
THE MOTHER HAS SHOWN US TO THIS HIDDEN VALE ... COME THIS WAY ... JOIN ME!
NO!! I'VE SEEN WHAT YOU REALLY ARE ... WHAT YOU WILL BECOME ...
I'VE SEEN YOUR TRUE FACE!
WHAT ... ARE YOU THE PROPHETESS SO SUDDENLY?
GO ON, RUN, YOU LITTLE BITCH ... I NEVER NEEDED YOU ANYWAY!
THIS IS A WARRIOR'S QUEST!
I HAVE NO TIME FOR MOON-GAZERS ... I HAVE A DESTINY TO FULFIL ...
THE SUN-GOD BECKONS TO ME ... HE OFFERS ME THE CROWN OF FIRE ... THE SCEPTRE OF GOLD ...
HE OFFERS ME POWER, BETHBARA ... WHAT COULD YOU KNOW OF SUCH THINGS?
WAITING FOR YOUR PRINCE TO COME, EH?
YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED AT HOME, KEEPING YOUR FATHER'S HOUSE ...
NO ... YOU'RE WRONG ... I CAN BE A WARRIOR, TOO ...
THERE! AT THE SUMMIT OF THE TOR! I SEE MY LIGHT SHINING!
A SIGN FROM THE GODS!
BUT FOR CAED THE DREAM OF POWER WAS TOO STRONG ...
AND BEFORE LONG HE HAD CLIMBED THE HILL, HIS QUEST ALMOST AT AN END ...

the Spiralpath

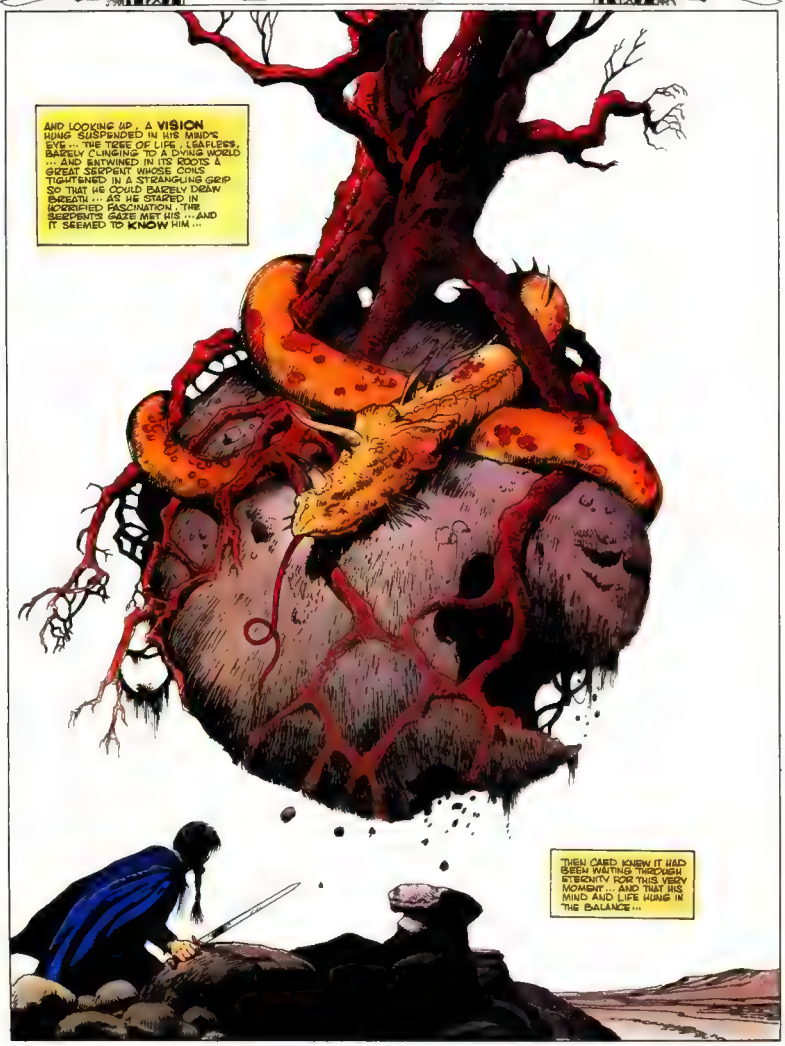
THERE CAN BE NO ENDINGS ... YOU HAVE TAKEN YOUR FIRST STEPS ON THE SPIRAL PATH ...
NOTHING REMAINS BUT TO FOLLOW ITS COURSE TO THE SUMMIT ...
EMBRACE THE DRAGON, BETHBARA ... OR IT WILL **DESTROY** YOU ...

the SPIRALPATH

the SPIRALPATH


FOR HIS WAS A WARRIOR'S PATH AND HE WAS FORCED TO FOLLOW WHERE IT LED...
NOT KNOWING IF IT WOULD BRING HIM TO HELL, OR THE HALLS OF PARADISE.

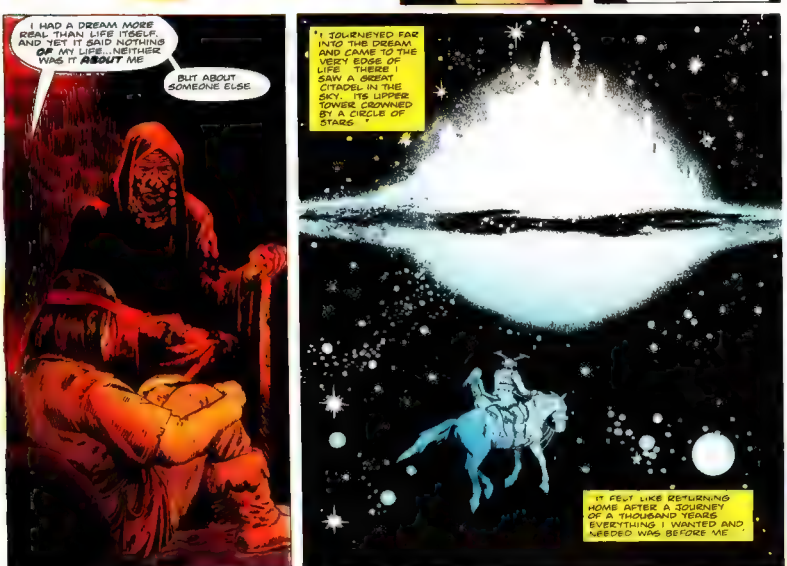
AND AS HE STUMBLED ON, IN HIS HAND WAS THE SPELL HE HAD CARRIED WHEN HIS MASTER FIRST SET HIM FREE...
AND HIS OTHER HAND GRASPED A SWORD.


AND LOOKING UP, A VISION HUNG SUSPENDED IN HIS MIND'S EYE... THE TREE OF LIFE, LEAFLESS, BARELY CLINGING TO A DYING WORLD ... AND ENTWINED IN ITS ROOTS A GREAT SERPENT WHOSE COILS TIGHTENED IN A STRANGLING GRIP SO THAT HE COULD BARELY DRAW BREATH ... AS HE STARED IN HORRIFIED FASCINATION, THE SERPENT'S GAZE MET HIS ... AND IT SEEMED TO KNOW HIM ...
THEN CAED KNEW IT HAD BEEN WAITING THROUGH ETERNITY FOR THIS VERY MOMENT ... AND THAT HIS MIND AND LIFE HUNG IN THE BALANCE ...

the SPIRALPATH

IN A DISTANT LAND, BENEATH A SKY THAT WAS NEVER SEEN ON EARTH, A TIMELESS CONFRONTATION WAS TAKING PLACE
AS A WARRIOR FACED A DRAGON...
THE WARRIOR, CAED, FACED HIMSELF. HIS FEARS, THE FEAR OF DARKNESS AND DEATH... OF THE BEAST AND OF FALLING... ALL EMBODIED IN ONE GIGANTIC SERPENT
THE WARRIOR BELIEVED THAT TO VANQUISH THE DRAGON WAS TO VANQUISH FEAR ITSELF AND THUS GAIN GREAT POWER...
POWER IN BATTLE. POWER OVER MEN. POWER TO ENTER THE REALM OF MYTH AND ULTIMATELY, THE HALLS OF PARADISE
BUT THE WARRIOR, LIKE THE SWORD HE CARRIED, MUST FIRST BE TESTED IN FIRE...

FLAMES CRACKLED AND SIGHED IN THE NIGHT, DISPELLING THE DARKNESS OF A STONE CAVE... SOMEWHERE IN A HIDDEN VALLEY
A YOUNG GIRL HAD DARED TO DREAM OF POWER
NOT THE POWER OF DRAGONS NOR BRIGHT SWORDS GLINTING IN THE SUN NOR FALLEN FOES FROM AN ARMY OF DEMONS...
BUT THE POWER THAT LAY DORMANT IN HER OWN MIND OF IMAGININGS
AND OF MAGIC...
SUCH A STRANGE DREAM
SPEAK OF YOUR DREAMS. THEY CAN TELL YOU OF GREAT CHANGES TO COME... OF THINGS THAT MAY YET BE OR THAT WHICH HAPPENED LONG AGO
SO THAT YOU BECOME THE POINT IN TIME UPON WHICH ALL THINGS ARE BALANCED


I HAD A DREAM MORE REAL THAN LIFE ITSELF, AND YET IT SAID NOTHING OF MY LIFE... NEITHER WAS IT ABOUT ME
BUT ABOUT SOMEONE ELSE
" I JOURNEYED FAR INTO THE DREAM AND CAME TO THE VERY EDGE OF LIFE. THERE I SAW A GREAT CITADEL IN THE SKY... ITS UPPER TOWERS CROWNED BY A CIRCLE OF STARS "
IT FELT LIKE RETURNING HOME AFTER A JOURNEY OF A THOUSAND YEARS EVERYTHING I WANTED AND NEEDED WAS BEFORE ME

the Spiralpath

IF YOU HAD AWAKENED HIM YOU... AND ALL THAT YOU KNOW, WOULD HAVE CEASED TO EXIST.
WHILE THE DREAMER SLEEPS, THE WORLD CONTINUES A SHADOW PLAY IN THE DARK

...A RIPPLE ON THE SURFACE OF A POOL, GIVEN SUBSTANCE BY THE THOUGHTS
THE SPELL! THE WORDS I HAVE CARRIED FOR SO LONG... VANISHED IN FLAMES...
GONE!

"IN SUCH A WORLD, ALL [illegible] ITSELF LIKE THUNDER
MY STRENGTH IS GONE... I CAN BARELY LIFT MY SWORD! WHAT HOPE IS THERE FOR ME NOW... NOW THAT MY MASTER HAS FAILED ME?

the Spiral Path

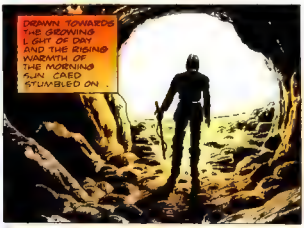
ACROSS A FLAT, DESOLATE LAND HE DRIFTED LOOKING DOWN ON FIELDS OF DEAD THAT STRETCHED FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON..
ON WHAT HAD BEEN HIS WORLD, HIS KINGDOM..

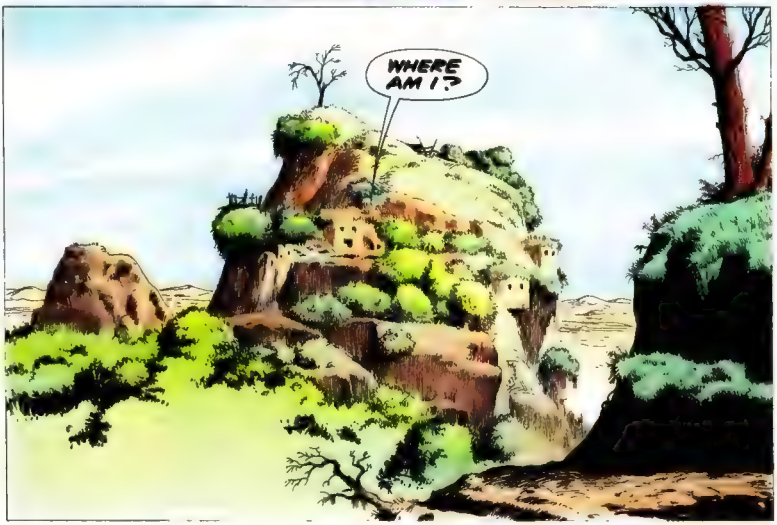
the SPIRALPATH

FLICKERING SHADOWS SHIMMERED LIKE A DRAWN CURTAIN LIGHT FLOODED THE RECESSES OF A CAVE, WHERE A FIRE SMOULDERED AND A WARRIOR STARED INTO THE FACE OF FEAR
THE FRANTIC BEAT OF WINGS ECHOING IN HIS EARS

BUT NOW HIS HEART HAD GROWN COLD HIS JOURNEY TOO FRAUGHT WITH DANGER TOO TATTERED WITH DESPAIR
BETHBARA? ARE YOU THERE? BETHBARA!

the Spiralpath



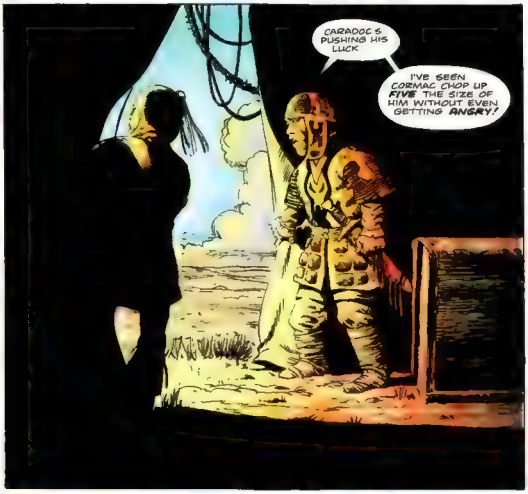


the Spiralpath

"THE VALLEY IS A SPECIAL PLACE, BETHBARA. IT'S A GATEWAY TO OTHER WORLDS. ESPECIALLY UNDER THE HILLS."
"YOU CAN ENTER A CAVE IN ONE HILL... AND COME OUT SOMEWHERE DIFFERENT. AND ALL OF THESE HILLS WERE WORKED BY MY ANCESTORS, AND YOURS, TOO..."
MINE? BUT I HAVE NO ANCESTORS HERE.
YOUR FATHER WAS A DRUID. AND WHAT OF YOUR MOTHER?
MY MOTHER DIED GIVING BIRTH TO ME. MY FATHER HARDLY EVER SPEAKS OF HER.
WOULD IT SURPRISE YOU TO KNOW THAT SHE WAS ONE OF US, BETHBARA? ONE OF THIS TRIBE, FROM THIS VALLEY?
SHE WAS A STRONG, BRAVE WOMAN... A WOMAN OF POWER...
SHE WAS ONE OF US...

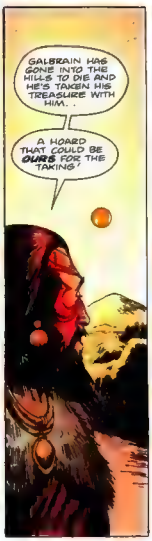
CORMAC! IT'S BEEN TWO DAYS SINCE WE ARRIVED AT THIS GODFORSAKEN SPOT... TWO WHOLE DAYS OF WAITING AND FIDGETTING... MY MEN ARE RESTLESS. WE WANT TO PUSH ON!
SOMETIMES YOU SPEAK LIKE A THOUGHTLESS CHILD, CARADOC
DO YOU KNOW WHO HAS SPIRITED KING GALBRAIN AWAY?
RUAD
ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL SORCERERS THIS LAND HAS EVER KNOWN
RUAD HAD WALKED THE SPIRAL PATH A DOZEN TIMES OR MORE...
AND EACH TIME HE CAME BACK STRONGER...
UNTIL NOW!
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
IT MEANS ALL HIS POWER WAS PUT INTO GUARDING GALBRAIN
THERE IS SOMETHING PROTECTING THAT HILL WHICH IS VERY STRONG, BELIEVE ME
WHEN WE'VE ESTABLISHED WHAT THAT SORCERY IS, WE'LL GO IN
BUT NOT BEFORE!
YOU ARE A CAUTIOUS MAN, CORMAC
AND CAUTIOUS MEN GARNER NO HONOUR WHERE I COME FROM

UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOU'RE NOT TELLING ME EVERYTHING YOU KNOW HMM?


CARADOC'S PUSHING HIS LUCK
I'VE SEEN CORMAC CHOP UP FIVE THE SIZE OF HIM WITHOUT EVEN GETTING ANGRY!

SORCERY! WHAT SORCERY COULD EVER DEFLECT A SOUND BLADE?
THERE'S MORE TO THIS THAN MEETS THE EYE

THERE'S TREASURE UP THERE! A KING'S TREASURE!
AND CORMAC WANTS IT ALL FOR HIMSELF!


GALBRAIN HAS GONE INTO THE HILLS TO DIE AND HE'S TAKEN HIS TREASURE WITH HIM..
A HOARD THAT COULD BE OURS FOR THE TAKING!

AND SO, THAT NIGHT, CARADOC AND A DOZEN MEN STOLE AWAY FROM THE CAMPFIRES
AND INTO THE NIGHT

AND AS THEY REACHED THE PATH THAT LED TO THE SUMMIT OF THE HILL, A DARK SHAPE MATERIALISED FROM THE SHADOWS

A SHAPE THAT GLIDED SILENTLY ACROSS THE GROUND, AND TOOK UP A POSITION AT THE REAR OF THE COLUMN

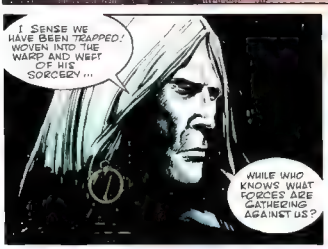
A BLADE HISSED IN THE NIGHT ONE MAN FELL, THEN ANOTHER
AND THE SHAPE MOVED ON

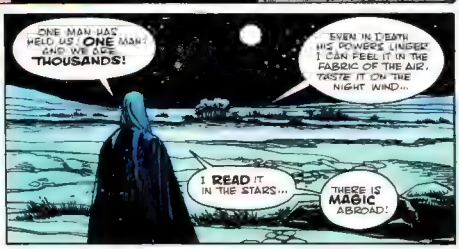
UNTIL
THIS IS WHERE WE SPLIT UP. THERE'S AT LEAST THREE ENTRANCES ON THIS SIDE

WE'LL BREAK UP INTO GROUPS OF FOUR AND
WHAT THE HELL?

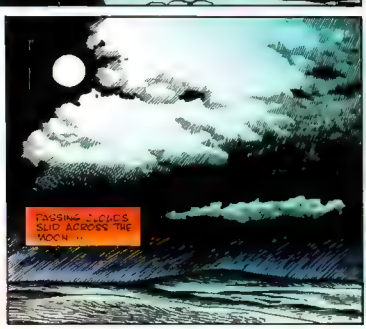
the SPIRALPATH

BENEATH A FLICKERING CANOPY OF STARS THE MASSED ARMIES OF ARTUR, LORD OF DEATH LAY ENCAMPED...
LIGHT FROM A PALE MOON SILVERED A HEAD OF DUST WHITE HAIR... BLEACHING SKIN ALREADY AS PALE AS DEATH
DAMN THE DRUID! EVERYTHING IS OUT OF PLACE... EVEN TIME FLOWS AT A DIFFERENT PACE ON THESE FORSAKEN PLAINS...
THE ALBINO, CORMAC, GAZED AT THE SHIMMERING MOON AND CURSED...


I SENSE WE HAVE BEEN TRAPPED! WOVEN INTO THE WARP AND WEFT OF HIS SORCERY...
WHILE WHO KNOWS WHAT FORCES ARE GATHERING AGAINST US?


ONE MAN HAS HELD US, ONE MAN! AND WE ARE THOUSANDS!
EVEN IN DEATH HIS POWERS LINGER! I CAN FEEL IT IN THE FABRIC OF THE AIR, TASTE IT ON THE NIGHT WIND...
I READ IT IN THE STARS...
THERE IS MAGIC ABROAD!

AAAHHH!
AHH... YES! HE FEELS IT, TOO... WHO COULD FEEL IT MORE THAN HE?


PASSING CLOUDS SLID ACROSS THE MOON...

the SPIRALPATH

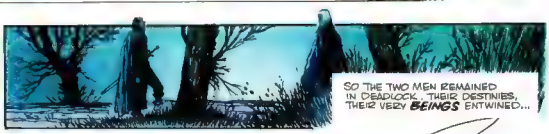
AND IN THEIR WAKE CAWING SILENT FOLLOWER
THE CROW! THE CROW FLIES AT NIGHT!
THIS DOES NOT AUGER WELL... THERE IS AN IMPEDIMENT HERE...
THE NIGHT HAS GROWN A SHADE DARKER!
DRY LEAVES RUSTLED IN THE TREES NEARBY... CORMAC HELD HIS BREATH ... WAITING...
CARADOC!
CORMAC MUTTERED INCOHERENTLY FORMING A SIGN TO PROTECT
INTO THE WICKERMAN HALL AS
GLIDING LIKE A WHITE WRAITH BETWEEN THE TREES, SEEKING HIS PREY...

UNAWARE THAT HIS EVERY MOVE WAS BEING CAREFULLY WATCHED...
OR THAT HIS PREY WAS SO CLOSE AT HAND!
CLANG
FFWEEEEOOOOM!
BRANG!
THEN SUDDENLY, CORMAC WAS ALONE... STARING HARD INTO THE DARK, HIS HEART POUNDING...

the SPIRAL PATH

AND THE DANCE OF DEATH BEGAN AGAIN...
JUST BEYOND THE VISIBLE WORLD, CORMAC'S POWER GATHERED ITSELF...
DETACHING ITSELF FROM HIS PHYSICAL BODY...
WITH PRODIGIOUS STRENGTH AND CONTROL, HIS DARK SOUL REACHED OUT...
TO ENTWINE THE SHADOW CREATURE...

the Spiralpath



THEN CORMAC SAW THE FUTILITY OF HIS ACTIONS... THE PATH HE WALKED LED ONLY TO THIS POINT AND NO FURTHER...
THE INTENDED BLOW NEVER FELL...

the Spiralpath

THROUGH THE LONG DARK DREAM OF LIFE THE WARRIOR CAED HAD JOURNEYED ... HUMILIATED, DEFEATED AND ALWAYS SHADOWED BY THE SPECTRE OF DEATH. NOW HIS INITIATION WAS ALMOST AT HAND. THE DRUIDIC POWER HE CRAVED WAS ONLY A STEP AWAY — SOON HE WOULD FACE THE LORD OF DEATH HIMSELF, THE LAST OF THE OLD GODS, THE RELIC-KING...
ARTÛK! I HAVE COME FOR YOU!
I WILL LAY YOU WASTE, ARTÛK...
SEND YOUR SPIRIT ALOFT TO MOAN IN THE ALDERS AND FLY SHADOWLESS ACROSS THE MOON...
I AM A SCOURGE AND A CURSE...
I AM A WIND OF KNIVES!
DAMN YOUR BLEACHED BONES ... ARE YOU NOT HERE?
HAVE YOU SENSED MY POWER AND FLED?
IT WAS ARTÛK'S FOLLOWERS WHO MOST FEARED THE STRANGE AND DEADLY FORCE THAT HAD APPEARED AMONG THEM ... A GHOST, A SHADOW-BEING FROM THE OTHER-WORLD...
AND EVEN NOW A SHADOW PASSED OVERHEAD, STRIKING FEAR INTO THEIR HEARTS AND NUMBING THEIR LIMBS...
THE LITTER TILTED... SPILLING ITS UNSPEAKABLE OCCUPANT...
STRUGGLING TO MOVE HIS DERELICT BODY, ARTÛK BEGAN TO CRAWL ... WITHOUT MUSCLE OR LIGAMENT, ONLY SHEER POWER OF WILL...
AND THE RAIN BEAT DOWN, RAPPED HIS ANCIENT SKULL BEDRAGGLED HIS DREAD-LOCKS, PUSHED HIM INTO THE MIRE
IN THE DARK VOID OF HIS BEING HE KNEW THE STORM HAD BEEN CALLED FORTH TO THWART HIM ... AND HE WAS POWERLESS TO RESIST...

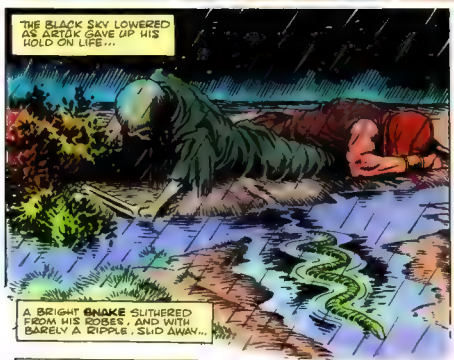
the SPIRALPATH

NOW DARKER SHAPES WHEELED IN THE SKY . THE AIR WAS FILLED WITH A FRANTIC BEATING OF WINGS...
IN AN ENDLESS SPIRAL THEY FELL TO EARTH ... THE LORDS OF CARRION ... THE STORM-CROWS . HARBINGERS OF DEATH...
IN THEIR MIDST A SOLID SHAPE EMERGED ... A MAN-LIKE FIGURE...
QUICKLY! GATHER TO ME AND PROTECT OUR LORD!
THAK!
CHOK!

the Spiralpath

IN THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE, SILENCE DESCENDED, HISSING LIKE RAIN IN THE WARRIORS EARS...
AND THEN A NEW SOUND... A GASPING, SOBBING...
A SUCKING SOUND OF FEET... RUNNING THROUGH MUD...
FOLLOWED BY A BRIEF CRY OF DESPAIR...
AS THE SOFT EARTH YIELDED AND HELD FAST!
CAED MOVED FORWARD, LEAVING NO TRACE, NO MARK WHERE HE TROD ... A DRAGON'S EYES LOOKED OUT THROUGH HIS. IT'S POWER ARCED FROM HORIZON TO HORIZON...
I HAVE COME FOR YOU, ARTÛK!
DEATH HOLDS NO FEAR FOR ME! I AM THE LORD OF DEATH!
CAN YOU LOOK AT MY TRUE FACE AND THINK OTHERWISE?
YOU WERE ONCE HUMAN, ARTÛK ... AS I USED TO BE.. AND YOU WERE ONCE A WARRIOR...
I HAVE TRAVELLED THE SAME PATH AS YOU AND I HAVE BECOME DEATH'S MESSENGER, LIKE YOU...
I AM THE REAPER... THE REIVER. MEN LEAP ONTO MY BLADE THINKING DEATH IS AN END TO THEIR FEAR AND YEARNING...
BUT IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

the SPIRALPATH


THE BLACK SKY LOWERED AS ARTÛK GAVE UP HIS HOLD ON LIFE...
A BRIGHT SNAKE SLITHERED FROM HIS ROBES, AND WITH BARELY A RIPPLE, SLID AWAY...

the SPIRAL PATH

AND HE TOOK HIS PLACE AT THEIR HEAD.
LEADING THEM BACK ONTO THE PLAINS, AWAY FROM THE HAUNTED MOUNTAINS AND INTO THE HEART OF HIS KINGDOM...

TRUE TO THE MOTHER'S PROPHECY A NEW KING ROSE IN TAIRNGIR... A KING OF TERROR AND DEATH...
THE MAN, THE CROW AND THE DRAGON... ALL ENTANGLED IN THE TENDRILS OF SORCERY, THE COILS OF THE SERPENT...

AND IN THOSE SAME MOUNTAINS... IN TIME... THERE ROSE A QUEEN, BETHBARA BY NAME... WHO WAS SAID TO INHABIT HER DREAMS WITH GOVERNANCE... AND EVEN POWER...
KNOWING, EVEN AS SHE DID SO, THAT SHE MUST ENCOUNTER THE WARRIOR CAED ONCE AGAIN... WITH THE FATE OF A KINGDOM AT STAKE...

HERE ENDS THE FIRST TWIST IN **THE SPIRAL PATH**— A SEQUEL, **THE SILVER CIRCLE**, MAY APPEAR AT A LATER DATE.

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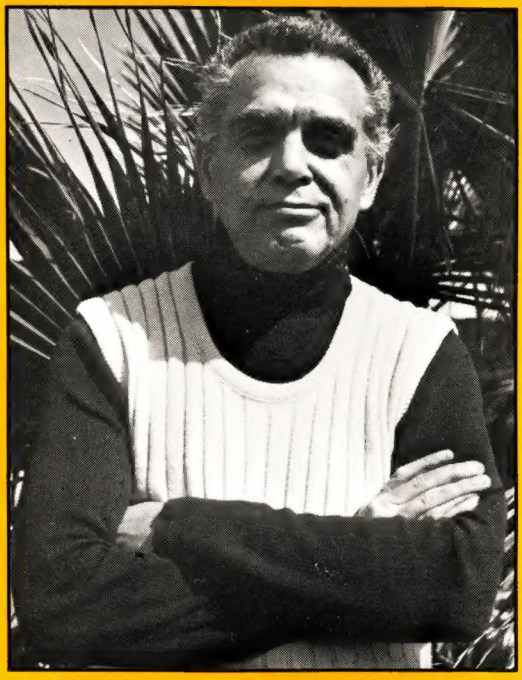

What about Jack?

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